

# Christian Graces

Colossians 4:2-18

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**BIG BEND  
BIBLE  
FELLOWSHIP**

## Colossians 4:2-6 – Christian Graces

<sup>2</sup> Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; <sup>3</sup> meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, <sup>4</sup> that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. <sup>5</sup> Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. <sup>6</sup> Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

### v2 – What was Paul’s admonition to the Colossians?

*Continue earnestly in prayer:* Paul supported the Colossian church through His prayers for them. Their life and ministry would continue to prosper through continued vigilance in prayer, including prayer on their part.

- The Greek word for “continue” means ‘to be strong,’ it implies persistence and fervor.

### What does it mean to be vigilant in prayer?

The Greek word for vigilant means to be wakeful.

- The phrase could well mean that Paul is telling them not to go to sleep when they pray.
- Sometimes we pray as if we were asleep, and our prayers simply sound and feel tired and sleepy.

### Why is it important to be thankful in prayer?

When we pray with thanksgiving, we remember the great things God has done. This praises Him and gives us confidence that our prayers will be answered.

- Prayer with thanksgiving may suggest the threefold rhythm: intercession, ‘watching’ for answers to prayer, and thanksgiving when answers appear.

### v3 – What else did Paul want the Colossians to include in their prayers?

*Meanwhile praying also for us:* Paul didn’t ask for prayer for his personal needs (which were many), but that God would open to us a *door for the word*.

- The word picture of an open door as an open opportunity for the gospel is also seen in Acts 14:27, 1 Corinthians 16:9, and 2 Corinthians 2:12.

### What is the mystery of Christ?

The term mystery (mysterion) typically refers to something not previously revealed.

- Paul referred to the Word of God as the mystery that had been hidden from the ages and generations but has now been revealed (Colossians 1:25–26).
- Paul adds that the mystery had been revealed not only to the Jews but also to the Gentiles. That mystery is “Christ in you—the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27).
- A bit further into the context, Paul refers to God’s mystery as Christ Himself (Colossians 2:2).

Throughout his letter to the Colossians, Paul identifies the mystery as Christ and His relationship to believers being revealed in a way not previously communicated.

- In Ephesians 3:4 Paul refers to the “mystery of Christ” going on to explain that Christ’s relationship with the church and its parallel to marriage was a great mystery (Ephesians 5:32).

### Why was Paul in chains?

Paul was in Roman custody because of a Jewish riot on the temple mount over the mere mention of God’s offer of grace to the Gentiles (Acts 22:21-22).

### v4 – How should Paul speak?

Even though Paul was in chains for his faithfulness to the gospel, he knew that he *ought to speak* it in a way that would make it *manifest* (clearly evident).

- Paul wanted prayer that he would continue to make the gospel clear and evident, even if it meant more chains.

### v5 – What follows prayer?

*Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside:* The Christian life isn’t only lived in the prayer closet. There also must be practical, lived-out Christianity, which lives wisely toward those who are outside the church.

### What does it mean to redeem the time?

Ephesians 5:15–16 – *See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*

Redeeming the time is related to wisdom in how we “walk,” that is, in how we live. To redeem something means to buy it back, to regain possession of it.

- God wants us to live in constant awareness of the shortness of our mortal lives and make the most of the time we have.
- We seize every opportunity and use it for God’s glory.
- We think through our plans and make sure they align with God’s will.
- And we avoid empty, harmful activities such as getting drunk.

Jesus taught the necessity of redeeming the time:

John 9:4 – *We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work.*

### How can we redeem the time?

- Have an eternal perspective knowing there will be no rewards for things done for selfish, carnal reasons which will burn up and blow away (1 Cor 3:12–15).
- We should ask God to help us do something that has eternal significance every day; planting & watering.

### What does James 4:14 say about redeeming the time?

James 4:14 – *you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.*

This reminds us that our earthly lives are no more than a fog that appears and then quickly evaporates.

- Our money and possessions will be given to someone else.
- Our jobs will be filled by others.
- Our families may remember us with fondness but will move on with lives that don’t include us.
- All that remains of our lives on earth is that which was invested in eternity.

In the end, all that matters is what we did or did not do to redeem the time (Psalm 102:3; 144:4).

### v6 – What does it mean to have grace in our speech?

*Let your speech always be with grace:* The word ‘grace’ has, in Greek as in English, the possible double meaning of God’s grace and human graciousness.

### What does it mean to season our speech with salt?

The right amount of salt brings out the flavor in food. Likewise, our conversation should be flavored in such a way that it is appealing to those to whom we speak.

### Why should our speech be attractive?

Because we represent the Savior and we may have an opportunity to converse with a seeker... *That you may know how you ought to answer each one:* We need to be ready to answer the questions of those who want to believe but are struggling...

1 Peter 3:15 – *always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear*

(humility & respect for God)

### How may we make our speech more attractive?

Using humor, encouraging comments, and wit.

### How can we be better at dispensing witticisms?

Wit means mental sharpness and inventiveness, keen intelligence. It also refers to using words and ideas in a quick and inventive way to create humor.

- Some applicable synonyms are: shrewdness, astuteness, cleverness, common sense, wisdom, understanding, discernment, perception, insight
- Tailoring our speech to resonate with who we’re talking to is essential to being witty. Paul was a master at this...

1 Corinthians 9:22 – *...to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some*

### Colossians 4:7-15 – Final Greetings

<sup>7</sup> *Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me.* <sup>8</sup> *I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts,* <sup>9</sup> *with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will make known to you all things which are happening here.*

<sup>10</sup> *Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him),* <sup>11</sup> *and Jesus who is called Justus. These are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me.*

<sup>12</sup> *Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.* <sup>13</sup> *For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis.* <sup>14</sup> *Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you.* <sup>15</sup> *Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that is in his house.*

### **v7 – Who was Tychicus?**

*A beloved brother:* Apparently, the Colossian Christians didn't know who Tychicus was. He would carry this letter to them (*will tell you all the news about me*).

- Apparently Epaphras, who brought the news from Colosse to Paul in Rome (Colossians 1:7), would not return to Colosse soon; so Paul sent Tychicus instead.
- Tychicus is mentioned in Acts 20:4 as one of the men who came with Paul from the Roman province of Asia to Jerusalem, to carry the offering of those believers to the needy Christians of Jerusalem and Judea.
- The reference to Tychicus is almost identical with Ephesians 6:21-22. He was evidently the bearer of the letter to the Ephesians as well as this one.

### **v8 – Why did Paul send Tychicus?**

That he would get to know the Colossians and be an encouragement to them. Apparently Tychicus would report back to Paul what he learned about them since he couldn't go there himself.

### **v9 – Who would accompany Tychicus?**

Onesimus was a slave owned by a believer in Colosse, but he ran away and came into contact with Paul in Rome. There, Onesimus became a Christian and a dedicated helper to Paul. His story is in Paul's letter to Philemon.

- Paul could have wrote about Onesimus, "the escaped slave who I am sending back to his master." Instead, he called him a faithful and beloved brother, a fellow Christian (*who is one of you*).

### **v10 – Who was Aristarchus?**

He was a Macedonian from Thessalonica (Acts 20:4). He was Paul's travel companion, and with the apostle when the Ephesian mob seized him (Acts 19:29). He was also with Paul when he set sail for Rome under his Roman imprisonment (Acts 27:2).

- Here Paul calls him my fellow prisoner. It seems that Aristarchus had an interesting habit of being with Paul in hard times.

### **Who was Mark?**

*The cousin of Barnabas... if he comes to you, welcome him:* Though Paul had much earlier a falling out with both Barnabas and Mark (Acts 13:5, 13:13, and 15:36-40), clearly by the time he wrote this all was in the past.

- The grace of God working in Paul meant that time changed him and softened him towards others who had previously offended him.

It is from this reference that we learn Mark was Barnabas' cousin — this throws light on the special consideration Barnabas gives to Mark in the narrative of Acts.

### **Why might the Colossians have known of Barnabas?**

Either this was through his reputation or through further missionary journeys that were not recorded in Acts.

### **v11 – Who was Jesus who is called Justus?**

Of this man, we know nothing except his name. He is numbered among these previous four men, all of them comforters to Paul in his Roman custody preceding his trial before Caesar (*they have proved to be a comfort to me*).

### **Why did Paul point out that these were his only fellow workers and were of the circumcision?**

At that time, Paul had only three fellow workers with him and these all were of a Jewish heritage. These three did a great work and proved to be a comfort to Paul.

### **v12 – Who was Epaphras?**

Epaphras was the one who shared the gospel with the Colossians and possibly started the church there: Paul speaks of "the day you heard [the gospel]" and reminds them that "you learned it from Epaphras" (Colossians 1:6–7). Epaphras traveled to Rome to visit Paul, informing Paul about the Colossians (Colossians 1:8).

- Aside from the letter to the Colossians, Epaphras' name shows up in Paul's personal letter to Philemon.

### **What had Epaphras prayed for the Colossians?**

Epaphras worked diligently at prayer knowing the danger of the false teaching in Colosse. So, Epaphras prayed that the Colossian Christians would stand perfect and complete in all the will of God, a wonderful prayer for anyone.

### **v13 – What does it mean that Epaphras had a great zeal for the Colossians?**

Epaphras prayed well because he cared well. If he lagged in zeal, he certainly would have lagged in prayer.

- Epaphras also had a great zeal for Laodicea and Hierapolis, neighboring cities of Colosse.

### **What do you think Epaphras probably prayed about regarding Laodicea?**

The Lord rebuked the Laodiceans in Revelation 3:14-22 for being lukewarm toward Him thinking they were rich while being spiritually poor.

#### **v14 – Who was Luke?**

*Luke the beloved physician:* This is the one passage that informs us that Luke, the human author of the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, was a physician. We also see that his works are written with a more scientific, analytical mindset (Luke 1:1-4) and have much detail that would interest a physician (Luke 4:38, 5:12-15, and 8:43).

- Perhaps Luke was in Rome to deliver a document he recently finished — the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, which probably were together a “friend of the court” report, explaining to the Romans why Paul stood before Caesar’s court.

#### **Who was Demas?**

Nothing positive is said about Demas, only that he greets the Colossian Christians and therefore must have been known to them. In Philemon 1:24 he is grouped among Paul’s fellow laborers. In the last mention of him in 2 Timothy 4:10, Paul said Demas had forsaken him, having loved this present world and gone on to Thessalonica.

#### **What insight does it give us about Paul’s imprisonment that Paul had so many visitors?**

The six people who greeted the Colossians were connected with Paul in Rome, during the time of his house arrest before appearing on trial before Caesar. This shows that during this imprisonment, unlike the later one described in 2 Timothy, Paul, though chained, enjoyed at least the occasional company of many friends and associates.

#### **v15 – Who was Nymphas?**

There has been some debate as to if Paul referred to a man or a woman with this name. Some manuscripts have the masculine form and some have the feminine.

*The church that is in his house:* Having no buildings of their own, the early church met as “house churches.” Because few houses were large, there were usually several “house churches” in a city.

- We must remember that there was no such thing as a special Church building until the third century. Up to that time the Christian congregations met in the houses of those who led the Church.

#### **Colossians 4:16-18 – Closing Exhortations and Blessing**

<sup>16</sup> Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea. <sup>17</sup> And say to Archippus, “Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.”

<sup>18</sup> This salutation by my own hand—Paul. Remember my chains. Grace be with you. Amen.

#### **v16 – What was Paul’s expectation for the reading of his letter to the Colossians?**

When Paul and other apostles wrote letters to churches, the letters were simply publicly read in the congregations and shared with other congregations.

- It was a way for the apostle to teach that church even when he could not personally be there.

#### **What happened to Paul’s letter to the Laodiceans?**

*And that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea:* Apparently, Paul wrote a letter to the Laodiceans that we do not have. We should not assume from this that our treasure of inspiration is incomplete. The Holy Spirit has chosen to preserve those letters that are inspired for the church in a universal sense. Paul was not inspired in this way every time he set pen to paper.

- It may be that this “missing” Laodicean letter was actually the letter to the Ephesians. It is certain that Ephesians was not written to the Church at Ephesus but was an encyclical letter meant to circulate among the Churches of Asia.

#### **v17 – What was the special word Paul had for Archippus?**

*Say to Archippus, “Take heed to the ministry”:* Paul wanted Archippus to be encouraged and strengthened, but he did not make this appeal to Archippus directly

- It was more fitting for the Colossians (or Laodiceans) to say this to Archippus than for Paul himself to say it to him. He needed to hear this from the people around him: “Fulfill your ministry.”

#### **Who was Archippus?**

The context of Colossians 4:17 leads some to think that though Archippus was part of the family of Philemon, he was connected with the church at Laodicea. Perhaps Archippus was the pastor of the church at Laodicea.

- Paul wrote another short word mentioning Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house (Philemon 1:2).
- This mention in Philemon 1:2 makes some people believe that he was the son of Philemon, since he is mentioned in the context of the wife of Philemon (Apphia) and his household (*the church in your house*).

**How does the admonition to *take heed to the ministry* apply to us today?**

This encouragement to Archippus spoke both to him and to us regarding some enduring principles of ministry.

- God gives ministry to His people.
- Ministry may be left unfulfilled.
- One must take heed to their ministry in order for it to be fulfilled.
- We should encourage others to fulfill their ministry.

**v18 – Why did Paul say this letter was *by my own hand*?**

As was the custom in that day, Paul generally dictated his letters and personally signed a postscript with his own hand.

**What did Paul want the letter readers to remember?**

Remember my chains: There is much emotion, sorrow, and strength in this simple phrase. Paul not only knew the confinement and loneliness of the prisoner; he also had the uncertainty of not knowing if his case before Caesar's court would end with his execution.

**Why did Paul conclude with, *grace be with you*?**

This conclusion was highly appropriate for the apostle of grace confronting a heresy emphasizing elaborate hidden mysteries and righteousness through works. We can only go forward safely in the Christian life if grace is with us.

**What applications come to mind from our discussion?**

- Christians should be vigilant and thankful in prayer.
- It is excellent to pray for others to grow in their knowledge of the will of God.
- The New Testament reveals many mysteries that were not known prior to the cross.
- Christians should “redeem the time” with an eternal perspective.
- Christians' speech should attract people to Jesus.
- Encouraging one another is important, particularly when they are suffering for being a Christian.